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Security Council

Seventy-first year

Provisional

7760th meeting
Thursday, 25 August 2016, 10 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. Ibrahim	(Malaysia)
Members:	Angola	Mr. Lucas
	China	Mr. Wu Haitao
	Egypt	Mr. Aboulwafa
	France	Mr. Lamek
	Japan	Mr. Okamura
	New Zealand	Mrs. Schwalger
	Russian Federation	Mr. Churkin
	Senegal	Mr. Seck
	Spain	Mr. González de Linares Palou
	Ukraine	Mr. Vitrenko
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Mr. Hickey
	United States of America	Ms. Sison
	Uruguay	Mrs. Nuñez
	Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of)	Mr. Méndez Graterol

Agenda

Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1998), 1239 (1999) and 1244 (1999)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (S/2016/666)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

Security Council resolutions 1160 (1998), 1199 (1998), 1203 (1998), 1239 (1999) and 1244 (1999)

Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (S/2016/666)

The President: In accordance with rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite the representative of Serbia to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome His Excellency Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Mr. Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, to participate in this meeting.

On behalf of the Council, I welcome Mr. Tanin, who is joining today's meeting via video-teleconference from Pristina.

In accordance with rule 39 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure, I invite Ms. Vlora Çitaku to participate in this meeting.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration the item on its agenda.

I wish to draw the attention of Council members to document S/2016/666, which contains the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo.

I now give the floor to Mr. Tanin.

Mr. Tanin: I am pleased to update the Security Council on recent key developments in Kosovo since the Secretary-General's previous report (S/2016/407) and offer some observations.

The situation in Kosovo over the past three months has been more stable than it had been during preceding reporting period. Nonetheless, security threats and political tensions remained beneath the surface. Following a period of relative calm, after months of unruly stand-offs in the Kosovo Assembly, a single issue gave way to new controversy: the ratification of the agreement on Kosovo's territorial delineation with the Republic of Montenegro. Political arguments and accusations followed, often straying far from the underlying facts. That irritated public sentiment, obstructed the functioning of the Assembly and delayed work on more pressing issues. Although the agreement had been arrived at with informed international support, the consideration of its ratification by the Assembly was postponed. No doubt, consensus-building efforts ought to have been made much earlier, well before the issue became a lightning rod for rancour and partisan debate. Regardless, new efforts have been undertaken by political leaders in order to ensure all additional questions are answered.

Meanwhile, the opposition parties continue working from the wings to try to generate, exploit and, if possible, prolong such moment in the supposed crisis. Whatever success they may ultimately achieve in strengthening an alternate pole of influence, the opposition appears to be more aware that the use of violence is counterproductive to that objective. In addition, acts of political violence, including three incidents involving explosives in August that targeted the Assembly, the home of a Kosovo official and the headquarters of a public broadcaster, are absolutely unacceptable. That is a problem that should continue to be managed responsibly by the authorities. From my recent talks with top leaders in Kosovo, I have the impression that they understand the need to place realism and practicality higher on their political agenda. Many have their eyes upon emerging wider trends, and the opportunity those trends offer to seize levers of opportunity and remove old obstacles in order to achieve faster progress.

I have gained the same impression about local leadership during my visits to municipalities and communities throughout Kosovo. In Gjakovë/Đakovica, the Mayor indicated that authority came with responsibility, not just privilege. In North Mitrovica, the main concerns were access to employment, reliable public services, and confidence in governing institutions. In Obilić/Kastriot, the impact of nearby outdated energy facilities, over which the municipality has had little or no say, endangers public health and safety and reduces social cohesion and local economic growth. In Vushtrri/Vučitrn, I learned that the different communities are able to work together towards a common future, and that inclusive governance is one

of the key elements needed for that work. I heard the desire for improved relations and more confidence among the ethnic communities. Behind all of that, it is apparent that economic, educational and health-care issues, as well as the rule of law and combating corruption, are the dominant concerns of people at the local level, not inter-ethnic politics. Recently, a young man in the Prizren region approached me to say that corruption was the biggest problem for his generation and for all people in Kosovo, a message I have heard on many occasions.

Throughout all of the former Yugoslavia, the immediate post-conflict generation has now reached voting age, and many are now graduating from tertiary education. Many young adults have known little of public life besides divisive post-conflict rhetoric. If stability and prosperity are to be achieved, the post-conflict generation is in need of clearer direction and better opportunities as inhabitants of modern Europe and as world citizens. A lack of promising trades and professions, public corruption and extremes of economic inequality all fracture the communities far more than ethnic or religious nationalism. Therefore, an impetus for reconciliation emerges from below, but in my view it needs to be strengthened from above as well by leaders. I already hear that clearly from some leaders. But I have also heard it from other segments of society as well, where individuals recognize the centrality of putting the past behind if there is to be meaningful movement forward.

Having returned from Belgrade just yesterday, I was also struck during my conversations with top leaders by the emphasis given to regional cooperation and better understanding of the positions of other sides when working to overcome the obstacles to trust and progress. As in the case of Pristina, they also specifically stressed the need for the European Union-led dialogue to be successful. Prime Minister Vučić in particular stressed to me that too much time was being lost and that what was needed was more serious and much more sustained commitment and work on dialogue — not only from leaders and negotiators but from the European Union and from all of us in the international community as well.

The European Union-led high level dialogue remains a cornerstone in the road towards reconciliation. It is the European Union perspective in the region that continues to be a main driver of reform, particularly in the vital areas of governance, the rule of law and human rights. Progress continued to be made in some areas during the reporting period, including the start of the refurbishment of the Mitrovica Main Bridge, as well as the narrowing of differences on the telecommunications issue. With regard to other agreements, in particular the agreement on the association/community of Serb majority municipalities in Kosovo, more focused work is clearly necessary. It is natural for delays in implementation to lead to second-guessing of the process itself by observers and participants alike. Leadership from both sides is at least as important as pragmatism and commitment, in order not only to reinvigorate but possibly also to deepen the process going forward.

Few of those displaced by the conflict have returned to their homes, and of those who returned, many have not stayed. Approximately 16,000 persons remain displaced within Kosovo, with many more outside. With the passage of time, many have by now built new lives in their places of displacement. Yet the voluntary, safe and dignified return of displaced persons is a fundamental right, and that issue should, I believe, be brought back into focus by all, including by the international community.

In order to achieve returns, constructive engagement is needed with returnees and receiving communities, which must be matched by political commitment, but, even more important, by the commitment of resources. According to the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, some 9,400 displaced persons are now registered to return. For that to take place, clear and realistic commitments need to be present, together with the allocation of the requisite resources and efforts in order to ensure that the proper conditions are in place.

Kosovo possesses a rich and diverse cultural heritage that includes religious, linguistic, artistic and social diversity. The Kosovo system has comprehensive legislation protecting the freedoms of language use, association and worship. It is the full implementation and enforcement of those strong legislative frameworks that remains an essential objective.

Over the past three months, there have been no large-scale inter-ethnic disturbances, nor any significant attacks against cultural sites. However, vulnerable groups, in particular among non-majority communities, have been subject to higher rates of intimidation. Statistics in that area must always be

treated with enormous caution, but those available at the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) suggest that there are, on average, around 25 potentially ethnically motivated crimes recorded in Kosovo every month. All communities are affected, and the primary motives behind the crimes are frequently found not to have been political. But it bears emphasizing that the victims of intimidation always have a different perspective from those who have not experienced it. More sensitivity to that essential truth is needed by the authorities on all sides, as well as on our part.

With respect to reconciliation, I wish to commend the courageous initiatives taken by President Thaçi. On 21 July, he visited and paid respects at a memorial commemorating 14 Kosovo Serb civilians from Staro Gradsko who had been murdered in that village shortly after the end of hostilities. A few days later, he visited another memorial to an unsolved crime against Kosovo Serbs in the village of Goraždevac where, in 2003, teenagers swimming in a river were murdered. Those visits remind us also of the fact that all leaders share a solemn responsibility to do more to help resolve the missing persons cases, which date back from the time of the conflict.

Seventeen years after the end of the conflict, the fate of over 1,600 persons remains undetermined. All communities are affected by the loss. The issue of the missing should not be allowed to slip from the political agenda, but the missing will be found, and their fates determined, only if there is fundamental and sustained commitment by all, including our Mission.

The phenomenon of violent extremism is a swiftly evolving global challenge. The presence of radical Islamist elements and organizers in Kosovo is known. Local authorities have taken numerous strong measures to mitigate the threat, but the presence of elements that have participated in recent foreign wars gives us all reasons to be vigilant and aware. The Kosovo authorities have implemented a strong law enforcement approach with respect to those who advocate violence and those who facilitate volunteer fighters. As the authorities have acknowledged, that can work only when it goes hand in hand with a development approach that effectively targets the specific socioeconomic drivers of extremism in Kosovo. There is also an important role to be played by the international community through well-coordinated assistance, including from the United Nations.

In recent days, we have been able to significantly strengthen constructive engagement with Kosovo leaders, which was reflected, among other things, in substantive meetings with President Thaçi, Prime Minister Mustafa and Foreign Minister Hoxhaj. My constructive engagement with Belgrade leaders, including my discussions this week with President Nikolić, Prime Minister Vučić and Foreign Minister Dačić, remain essential for maintaining our balanced and objective role within the framework of regional interaction and towards the full realization of our mandate.

In conclusion, I would like to highlight that, during the past few months, we have thoroughly reviewed the activities of the Mission and developed a focused vision not only for recalibrating and optimizing our work, but also for creating an atmosphere with all stakeholders that allows the Mission to engage more efficiently and effectively on both existing issues and emerging issues, such as the global problem of violent extremism and the development of workable frameworks for reconciliation. In short, we will be implementing the objectives that the Security Council has entrusted to us in a more up-to-date manner.

I thank the Council for its continuing support for UNMIK.

The President: I thank Mr. Tanin for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Dačić.

Mr. Dačić (Serbia) (*spoke in Serbian; English text provided by the delegation*): At the outset, I would like to express my gratitude to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Zahir Tanin, for presenting the report (S/2016/666) of the Secretary-General and to congratulate the President of the Security Council for his successful stewardship of the affairs of the Council during the month of August. I also extend my greetings to all the members of the Security Council.

The members of the Security Council deal with issues that pose security threats as they strive to fulfil the principal task entrusted to them by the Charter of the United Nations, namely, safeguarding of international peace. In doing so, they often encounter problems whose causes date back decades, even centuries. Presumably, members of the Council are not familiar, nor can they be, with all of the details, especially the minute ones, and all the facts relating to each and every problem that they are called upon to resolve. That puts

an even greater obligation on those who come before the Council to present only true facts — facts that they have checked. Serbia's representatives have always made every effort to address the Council in a constructive manner, as they wish to contribute to the process of reconciliation and to the stability of the region, as well as to the dialogue conducted in Brussels. Priština's representatives, however, continue to overload the Council with falsehoods and lies, and lately they have even engaged in outright propaganda.

At the previous meeting (see S/PV.7693) of the Security Council on the situation in Kosovo and Metohija, on 16 May, in addition to other fabrications, we heard that Albanians in Kosovo and Metohija were denied the right to play and that Albanian youngsters had been beaten and arrested by the Serbian police just because they were playing football. An uninformed listener might have thought that what was being described was a scene in a territory controlled by the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant. The next image he could have conjured up was that of a public execution of players on the sports field.

As in most countries in the world, football is the most popular sport in Serbia. Surely, the most widely known club from the southern Serbian province is the Priština Football Club; its golden era was the mid-1980s when it competed in Yugoslavia's Federal League I. Priština's best player ever was Fadil Vokrri, the current President of the so-called Football Association of Kosovo. That very same Fadil Vokrri decided in 1986, when he finished his season with Priština, to join no other club but the Partizan of Belgrade. Not the Partizani of Tirana, but the Partizan of Belgrade, where he played for three full years, while, incidentally, Slobodan Milošević was in power. During that period, Fadil Vokrri won caps 12 times while playing for Yugoslavia, and in a match with Flamurtari of Albania, he scored a goal and was voted the best player of the match. He says today that he still supports Belgrade's Partizan team. In addition to Vokrri, other Kosovo and Metohija Albanian footballers have played for Partizan, some of whom are legends in that club.

Does it sound believable that a player, allegedly abused, beaten and discriminated against simply because he was a member of a national minority, would play for the national team and a major club from the capital of that country for years? Some Council members are, I suppose, surprised, if not astonished, to hear such facts, considering what was heard at the previous Council meeting. Nothing can surprise me now, and I am expecting to hear, in a few minutes, new falsehoods, new lies, new propaganda outbursts.

One of the mantras always repeated by all representatives of Priština is that Kosovo and Metohija Albanians were loyal and good citizens of Yugoslavia before Slobodan Milošević took over the reins of power. That contention is simply another historically unfounded fabrication propagated throughout the international community in order to win support for the separatism and ethnic cleansing systematically conducted in Kosovo and Metohija over the past 100 years.

It is clear that systematic nationalism and separatism are at work in Kosovo and Metohija, the ideological backbone of which has, for years, been the League of Prizren, founded in 1878, which had the single goal of unifying all territories in the Balkans populated by Albanians into one State, bringing into question the territorial integrity not only of Serbia, but also of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Greece and other countries in the region. Unfortunately, it is patently obvious that some individuals, countries and international organizations have played a role in that regard, as revealed by the example of William Walker, former Head of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's Kosovo Verification Mission. On the basis of his hastily cobbled together assessments about Radek, a decision was taken to bomb Serbia and the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Today, 17 years later, William Walker is considered an honorary citizen of Albania, a hero of Kosovo, on whom Priština has awarded multiple decorations. William Walker is one of the few people who openly oppose the establishment of an expert court to try the crimes committed by the Kosovo Liberation Army, the establishment of which has been supported by the Security Council. He recently stated on Albanian television's top channel that he supports the idea of a greater Albania, that is, the unification of Albania and Kosovo.

Ms. Çitaku will presumably again speak about genocide and ethnic cleansing; however, that is simply the propaganda that she typically indulges in at Council meetings. I would like to warn the Council in advance to expect propaganda and lies. The basic definition of genocide, war crimes and ethnic cleansing is that of the destruction or expulsion of a population. Serbia's representatives are on record as stating, millions of times, that each and every crime should be punished.

However, history has failed to record a genocide after which those people who allegedly committed genocide have dwindled to 10 times fewer than before, while the number of people against whom that genocide was allegedly committed has grown substantially higher than before.

I would like the Council to remember that out of 427 localities, the Serbs have been expelled from 311. That is indeed ethnic cleansing of Serbs, however. The statistics make for disturbing and painful reading. The data I shall present are not from Serbian sources; they are drawn from the 1981 census at the time of Tito, before Milošević, and from the census taken in Kosovo by the Priština authorities in 2011.

Priština, as the Council is aware, is the seat of the Priština authorities and the largest city in Kosovo. In 1981, just 35 years ago, there were 43,875 Serbs living in Priština, and according to the 2011 census there remained just 430 — only 430. Therefore, 35 years ago there were 43,875, and now the number is 430. If one can count and deal with numbers, that is 100 times fewer people. In 1981, 140,043 Albanians lived in that city, and in the year 2011 the number of Albanians grew to 194,953. What kind of genocide or ethnic cleansing of Albanians can be demonstrated here?

In Uroševac in the year 1981 there were 18,285 Serbs, and in the year 2011 — listen carefully — there were just 32. That is 600 times fewer people. In 1981, 17,791 Serbs and Montenegrins lived in Peć, and in the year 2011 just 332 Serbs lived there. The town of Peć is where the Serbian Orthodox Church was established in the thirteenth century, and the Patriarchate of Peć, which is included in the UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites, is also located there. In the year 1981, 1,898 Serbs lived in Đakovica, today just 17 Serbs live there. In Podujevo they numbered 2,242; today there are 12, almost 200 times fewer. In the town where I was born, Prizren, the fourteenth century throne of Serbia, there were 11,651 Serbs living there in 1981, and by 2011 just 27 of them remained, according to United Nations statistics. Remember, the latter figures are drawn from United Nations statistical data, published in United Nations documents. Today there are only 27 persons, which is 400 times fewer.

What else can I say? Any comment seems to be vacuous in the face of this truth, these statistics and these facts. But we will let the representative of Priština engage in her propaganda; no doubt she will. However, I want the Council to realize that what I have shown is a realistic picture of the Serbs living in Kosovo. After all those events and centuries of problems in Kosovo and Metojiha, the situation today is that the ethnic cleansing of the Serbs has practically occurred. We are not even comparing statistics for the last one or two hundred years. We are comparing the results of the 1981 census that counted more than 40,000 Serbs living in Pristina.

Let me now turn to the report (S/2016/666) of the Secretary-General. The current and every future report of the Secretary-General on the work of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) should be also viewed in that broader historical context, which attests to the complexity of the situation in Kosovo and Metohija, and may contribute to a better understanding of the genesis of this question.

The report before us has been structured somewhat differently from previous ones. It introduces new sections — on the normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina and on partnership and cooperation, for instance. In the part related to the normalization of relations, the importance of the association/community of Serb majority municipalities is presented inadequately. It appears to be reduced to an administrative item; and it is fleetingly referred to in paragraphs 18 and 19 of the report. As is known, the association/community has not yet been established. Let me recall also on this occasion that the quest for an agreement in Brussels was motivated by the urge to find a way to protect, systematically and institutionally, the Serbian community in Kosovo and Metohija because of the non-existence of proper institutional mechanisms to effectively protect its interests. Under the Brussels Agreement, it is precisely the association/community of Serb majority municipalities that is charged with that task, which substantively builds on Security Council resolution 1244 (1999). Instead of being the central issue to be implemented as soon as possible, its establishment has been the subject of political blackmail. After all, the United States Vice-President Biden also said during his recent visit to Belgrade and Pristina that it was necessary to establish the association/community of Serb majority municipalities expeditiously as a condition for the process of regional stability and reconciliation.

I have to note that this report makes no mention of the situation of the Serbian and other communities south of the Ibar River either, where the majority of the Serbs of Kosovo and Metohija live. In doing so, I

would like to emphasize that not all problems are, nor can they be, related exclusively to the area north of the Ibar River. Disregard for the human rights and the problems encountered by the Serbs and the members of other communities, especially the Goranci, south of the Ibar River serves to amplify their feeling of isolation, neglect and hopelessness. The manner in which the concept document of the Kosovo authorities relating to returns is mentioned in the report creates a fictitious picture that Pristina is doing something serious in that regard. However, past experience gives us cause to believe otherwise. The absence of credible census data is invoked as a reason, or an excuse, for a whole range of concrete problems, from returns to the failure to adopt budgets in the four municipalities in the northern part of the province. All along, however, the following fact is glossed over, namely, that a census engineered by Pristina, one politically motivated, is unacceptable for a number of reasons. Such a census could hardly be used to improve the situation of the Serbs. After all, the situation could be improved even without a census if goodwill alone existed. And the incorporation of the sections on the rule of law and human rights under one heading glosses over the issue of the human rights of members of the minority communities.

To note simply that the level of returns is unacceptably low is not good enough; concrete reasons are needed to explain why the situation is so worrisome. Let me mention just some of them, including the administrative, institutional and legal obstacles to returns and the lack of security for the internally displaced persons to integrate locally in central Serbia —which is not the result of a conscious choice, but of the absence of any other alternative. The question of returns is inseparably linked to the protection and realization of the property rights of the Serbian population, including internally displaced persons.

The self-defeating fact is that sustainable returns have been realized only by some 4,000 persons, or 1.9 per cent. A tedious regurgitation of partial statistics related to the assaults on the life, security and the property of the Serbs and other non-Albanians is tantamount to casting a shadow of relativity on their civilization —persecution on an ethnic or religious basis that is unacceptable. The numerous cases of desecration, destruction and attacks on Serbian cultural and religious sites and the spreading of falsehoods, such as the one that mass graves are located next to the Church of Christ the Saviour in Pristina, are also unacceptable. Those fabrications have been spread for years now. The Director of the Institute of Forensic Medicine in Pristina said on 14 June that a witness had come forward who testified that excavations had been carried out 12 and 13 June 1999 and that there is reason to believe that the bodies of Kosovo and Metohija Albanians were buried at that location.

At Belgrade's request, excavations were undertaken on two occasions, on 13-14 and 27 July this year. The excavations were attended by Kosovo representatives alongside officials from the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo and representatives from Belgrade. It was established that there were no human remains or graves at the location. The spreading of the misinformation primarily served the purpose of seizing space in downtown Pristina where the Church of Christ the Saviour and the land are located, but also to discredit the Serbian Orthodox Church. And just to recall: the Church has never been completed; the Pristina authorities turned it into a public lavatory and a podium to shoot music videos featuring scantily clad singers, which is telltale evidence of Pristina's attitude towards the Serbian cultural and religious heritage.

The returns realized thus far attest to the fact that all the actors involved have failed the return process. It behooves all of us to change that and create conditions in which displaced persons will be given the choice of return or local integration, not only in words but also in deeds. To do so, however, elementary conditions in places of return regarding personal and property security, infrastructure and access to public services must be fulfilled. In that sense, I salute the call made in the report to the leaders of all sides to refocus on safe and sustainable returns of internally displaced persons.

What all the reports of the Secretary-General, including this one, have in common is the failure to characterize the incidents in Kosovo and Metohija as ethnically motivated. The report says, in one short sentence alone, that 86 incidents affecting members of minority communities were reported during the period under review; most of the victims were reported to be Kosovo Serbs. Not a single other word appears at all. An account of the reaction by relevant police, prosecutorial and judicial authorities is missing. Short of that, all attacks and other criminal offences against Serbs are depersonalized and reduced to statistics. The ultimate and most dangerous consequence of such an approach is gradual acceptance by all, including the international community, of virtual impunity for criminal offences

committed against the Serbs and other non-Albanians, including murder. Pristina's ban on the import of Serbian language textbooks into Kosovo and Metohija shows the extent to which Pristina is prepared to go to deny the Serbian community their rights. That practice also existed before, albeit sporadically, but the confiscation of all books in the Serbian language became a regular practice at the beginning of June when the St. Vitus Day Book Fair, scheduled to take place at Gračanica from 15 June to 1 July, had to be cancelled.

Security in Kosovo and Metohija has always been unstable. The radicalization of the political climate and the worsening of the security situation because of the rise of political and religious extremism only increased the instability. The report in front of us contains references to fighters from the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant who come from Kosovo and Metohija. With respect to the size of population, the Kosovo and Metohija Albanians account for the largest percentage of those fighting in the ranks of that terrorist organization. It is unnecessary to speak about the troubling consequences of that situation.

In the interests of regional stability and ever-better Serbian-Albanian relations, the Republic of Serbia will continue the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina. We shall continue the policy of the peaceful settlement of conflicts by addressing the normalization of relations responsibly and implementing the agreements reached in Brussels fully. The question of Kosovo and Metohija transcends the issues of territorial integrity and national identity. It is the tipping point that will define, long-term, the Serbian-Albanian relations, on which the stability and economic prospects of the entire region depend. Irrespective of the frequent lack of constructiveness on the other side, we shall continue to work arduously on strengthening relations, building confidence and promoting European values and perspectives for both peoples. We do not want the situation in Kosovo and Metohija to be a latent threat to the stability and progress of Serbia and the region. We shall work in good faith on resolving disputes peacefully, well aware that a long process lies ahead and that — to make things worse — we often lack an interlocutor to share with us a vision of a prosperous and politically forward-looking region.

I therefore call on the countries that have not recognized the unilateral declaration of independence of Kosovo to persevere, despite the pressures that many of ythem are exposed to, as part of their consistent respect for international law, the Charter of the United Nations and the supreme authority of the Security Council in maintaining international peace and security, including resolution 1244 (1999), which upholds the sovereignty and territorial integrity of the Republic of Serbia. Bear in mind that support by the international community is of key importance for success in the dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina, one of few successful examples of the peaceful settlement of disputes in the world. Change in the position of States that have not recognized the unilateral declaration of independence of Kosovo would affect negatively the continuation of the constructive attitude of the parties in the dialogue and the implementation of the agreements reached so far. That is what we ask for: an opportunity for dialogue and agreement in full accordance with international law, instead of unilateral acts and disrespect for the norms of the international legal order. Let me recall that international law is universal and that it applies to all, which is true also of its violation. What Serbia has experienced since 1998-19999 may befall any other country in the world.

At the same time, I call on the countries that use their statements in this organ to call for the violation of its legally binding resolutions not to do so. Let me repeat: under resolution 1244 (1999), adopted in accordance with Chapter VII of the Charter of the United Nations, Kosovo and Metohija is part of the Republic of Serbia, under interim administration by a United Nations mission. The resolution continues to be the valid legal basis of the administrative regime in Kosovo and Metohija, which can be changed only by the adoption of a new Security Council resolution, which has not happened thus far. I take this opportunity to call also on the countries that have recognized the unilateral declaration of independence of Kosovo to reconsider their decision against the background of all-important facts.

The President: I now give the floor to Ms. Çitaku.

Ms. Çitaku: It is always a great honour for me to be able to come here and speak before the Security Council on behalf of my country. It is not only an honour. It is also an emotional experience, because at times when we were voiceless, when our most basic human rights were being targeted in the most brutal way by the Serbian military and paramilitary forces, all in the Council spoke up. They became our voice and our hope. They restored our faith in humanity. They restored our belief that, no matter whether one is big

or small, powerful or powerless, if you fight for a just cause, you are never alone.

Since 1993 this organ has adopted seven resolutions related to Kosovo — resolutions calling for peace and putting an end to the war. For that we will be forever grateful. Dozens of presidential statements have also been issued, including presidential statement S/PRST/2005/51, on 24 October 2005, wherein the Council called for the start of a political process to determine Kosovo's future status.

In honouring the will of the people of Kosovo, and under the mediation of the Secretary-General's Special Representative, Kosovo has a final status. Kosovo is a free, independent and a sovereign State. And yet again, at Serbia's request, the International Court of Justice ruled unambiguously that Kosovo was within its rights when it declared independence and that it did not violate any international law, resolution 1244 (1999) or the constitutional framework. Kosovo today is a young republic. It faces challenges of course, but not the kind of challenges that would require us to meet every three months and take up the Councill's valuable time, which is in heavy demand for issues of much greater need and importance.

Once we were a nation of refugees; today we are not. But there are 20 million refugees in the world today, the largest number since the Second World War. There are millions of women who are subjected to sexual violence in areas of conflict, just like our women were during the war in Kosovo. There are children who are in desperate need of food, medicine and shelter, just like our children once were. The millions that are spent annually to maintain the United Nations Interim Administration in Kosovo (UNMIK) could be put to much better use. To justify my point, I am going to quote the report of the Secretary-General:

> "a fight erupted between a Kosovo Serb and a Kosovo Albanian over a parking space." (*S/2016/666, para. 12*)

On a serious note, if the Council decides to hold a meeting every time people fight about parking spaces in New York, or any other place in the world for that matter, it would not have any time to talk about anything else.

Another example from the report:

> "funds were stolen from the Orthodox Monastery of St. Jovan." (*ibid., para. 27*)

Actually, it was tips that were stolen. Most of the incidents detailed in the UNMIK report are of that nature, and they have nothing to do with inter-ethnic violence. That is not to say that we live in paradise. Kosovo today is still not the Kosovo we dreamed and fought for. A lot needs to be done to strengthen the rule of law and to fight corruption and organized crime, just like in any young country.

Although, together with our international partners, tremendous work has been accomplished in that regard, we recognize that there is still more to be done. Our citizens deserve equal opportunities to prosper regardless of their ethnic, religious or political backgrounds. We owe it to them, as they, every day, more and more, are giving us reasons to be proud with their hard work, selfless dedication and sacrifice. We do not have to look far to be inspired by the extraordinary stories of our people. Take the story of Fahrije Hoti from the village of Krusha. Her husband, along with 241 civilians, was massacred by Serbian forces in March 1999. In that small village, 139 women became widows overnight, 500 children fatherless.

But, because of Fahrije and other women like her, Kruša is no longer known only for its tragic past. After the war, they came back to find their houses in ashes. However, they did not despair; they did not lose themselves to hatred or revenge. They rebuilt their homes and they started working on their farms. They opened small businesses and shops, with very little or no institutional support. Because of Fahrije and other widows of Kruša, today there is smoke coming out of every chimney; there is life in that village. Despite Fahrije's tragic past, although she was never offered an apology, she talks about forgiveness:

> "I will never be able to forget what happened. But to forgive is human. A person cannot live if she or he does not forgive. That would be too heavy a burden to carry."

Fahrije is still waiting for the remains of her husband. He is still classified as missing.

Kosovo is ready to move on, but Serbia needs to be ready to let go. Serbia needs to reflect on its past and learn from it. We in Kosovo do not want to leave our children with any burden from the past. Last month, Kosovo President Hashim Thaçi visited and paid his respects at two memorials honouring Serbian civilians killed after the 1999 war in Kosovo. Two of them were children. Although we never managed to shed light on

those events, and bring the perpetrators of these crimes to justice, nonetheless we will never condone violence by anyone, and we will continue to ask for justice to be made. I would note that those acts happened at a time when our police and justice system was run by UNMIK. We will also continue to fight for justice for the 1,262 children that were killed in Kosovo during the war by Serbian military and paramilitary forces — for most of whom no one ever went to trial, despite clear evidence on who the perpetrators were.

While Kosovo goes to great lengths and undertakes unprecedented measures to contribute to peace and stability in the region, I must ask what Serbia doing. They want to erect a statue of Slobodan Milošević. What is the message that Serbia wants to send to victims from Vukovar, Srebrenica and Kosovo? Is that how Serbia views reconciliation? Rehabilitating the most notorious war criminal in Europe since the Second World War? And, more important, what message is Serbia sending to its own people? After all, Milošević and his regime were responsible for Serbian lives lost as well.

As was revealed by Serbian officials, six youngsters were killed in Peć in 1998, the so-called Panda Bar case. Back then, the Kosovo Liberation Army was blamed. But the truth was, as stated by Serbian officials two years ago, Serbian paramilitary forces were the perpetrators of that terrible act. But no matter how Serbia acts, we will not allow Serbia to drag us into a discourse of hatred and impunity. We will move forward, and we hope that Serbia will join us and the rest of the region on this journey. After all, we are neighbours. We are committed to the dialogue in Brussels, but we also believe that the process needs to become more dynamic, and especially more results-oriented. Dialogue is important, but implementation and good faith are everything.

On behalf of the Government of the Republic of Kosovo, I want to reiterate that, in line with our Constitution, we will implement every single agreement reached in Brussels. But our job is made difficult when Serbia continues to finance parallel institutions throughout Kosovo and tries to build colonies in northern Kosovo, violating not only our Constitution, but also resolution 1244 (1999). The current situation is rather paradoxical. While Serbia takes part in the Brussels dialogue for the normalization of relations with Kosovo, it continues to meddle in our internal affairs by supporting the operations of its parallel structures in Kosovo, in breach of the Brussels Agreement reached on the 19 April 2013.

That dualism of partially implementing Brussels agreements on one hand, while maintaining parallel structures on the other hand, allows Serbia to report at the European Union about progress in implementation and maintain its interference in Kosovo intact. In some ways, the implementation becomes a cover for interference and parallelism by Serbia. On the surface it looks as if the agreements are being implemented, but in reality the situation remains contradictory and far from what we agreed in Brussels.

Kosovo institutions show their commitment through acts. Since 2013, in addition to the annual budget, northern Serbian-majority municipalities received an additional €10 million from the special fund established to improve the quality of life of its citizens and to integrate northern municipalities. The European Union alone invested over €54 million in different projects in that part of Kosovo in the last three years. We will not stop there. We will do everything we can to demonstrate, through action, that any citizen of Kosovo, regardless of their ethnicity or religion, can feel at home and live without fear.

Kosovo will continue to be an active member of the coalition of nations fighting terrorism. Attacks in the streets of Nice, Turkey, Afghanistan and many other recent tragic incidents remind us that we are fighting a borderless war. While we express our deepest condolences for all the lives lost, let me reassure the Council that we will do everything we can to fight that evil, which strives to implant fear and demolish our way of life.

We in Kosovo are a multireligious and multicultural society. In Kosovo there are cities where mosques and Catholic and Orthodox churches share the same courtyard. We have always coexisted peacefully. Today, Kosovo is a secular republic. No matter how one prays, whether one believes in God, in nature or in evolution, as long as he or she is a law-abiding citizen, he or she will live in peace.

Those are values that we hold dear, and we will fight to defend them. For that reason, we have taken very serious measures to fight the phenomena of foreign fighters and radicalization. Kosovo was one of the first countries in Europe to adopt appropriate legislation and strategies to counter violent extremism. But we have gone far beyond words. Some 19 non-governmental

organizations that fuelled radicalization and that were financed with suspicious funds have been shut down. The Kosovo Police has initiated investigations against 199 people, and 102 people have been arrested. Seventy were indicted, and 34 people have already been convicted.

Today, around 50 Kosovars are in Syria and Iraq. However, because of the measures taken by our law-enforcement mechanisms, the number of Kosovars who have joined the Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant over the past 12 months is zero. I would like to quote United States Vice-President Biden, who, during his recent visit to the region, not only praised Kosovo's actions in countering violent extremism but also clearly said, "Kosovo is an example to follow".

During the reporting period, our international status was strengthened by the recognition of our independence by Suriname, by our becoming part of the Apostolic Convention and by our joining the International Exhibitions Bureau as its one hundred and seventieth member. In addition, Kosovo established diplomatic relations with three other countries, thereby expanding and strengthening our ties with the free world.

While the overall political discourse in Kosovo remains fierce, and while political parties are expressing their disagreements on some very sensitive and important issues, including the border demarcation with Montenegro, all of those parties were unanimous in condemning violence, including, specifically, the three attacks that occurred in the past few weeks in the Parliament building, at a public broadcasting company and in a private home. Police and other Kosovar and international law-enforcement mechanisms are working hard to bring the perpetrators to justice. There is no room for violence in our new republic, as we are struggling every day to build dialogue among ourselves and with our neighbours. That is the only way forward.

Although the sky might sometimes seem grey, I know that there is hope for Kosovo. I know that because our people, our young people, are giving us shining examples every day. Doruntina Sylejmani, a teenager from Kosovo, brought home a medal from the International Mathematical Olympiad. In a tough and rigorous competition, with the best and brightest from all around the globe, Doruntina won. Although she comes from a country that still needs to do a lot to improve the quality of education, she won, thereby inspiring thousands of young Kosovar children to dedicate themselves to science.

Then there is our golden pride, Majlinda Kelmendi, who brought us our first Olympic medal ever. Majlinda was offered millions to compete for other countries while Kosovo was still struggling to become a member of the International Olympic Committee. She declined those offers and waited for her chance to represent her country. She gave us all a lesson, especially those of us working in the public sector, that not everything is for sale and that there are things that money cannot buy. She became a hero to her people and an inspiration worldwide, as her story was showcased across the globe.

Women like Fahrije, Doruntina and Majlinda are the new heroes of Kosovo. They push our limits and make us become a better version of ourselves. They teach us that there is no excuse for failure, that no dream is too big and no hope is too high if we work hard and put our hearts into it.

The President: I shall now give the floor to the members of the Security Council.

Mr. Churkin (Russian Federation) (*spoke in Russian*): We welcome the participation in today's meeting of the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, Mr. Ivica Dačić, and share his considerations and views.

We would also like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, Mr. Zahir Tanin, for his briefing on the activities of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). Mr. Tanin's statement confirms that the situation in the province is far from being normal. In a great many respects the trend is of course towards a deterioration. Naturally, there was no objectivity in the statement of Ms. Çitaku, as is often the case.

The situation in the province remains unstable. We are again forced to note the continuing poor level of security for Serbs in Kosovo. The consequences of that are unceasing attacks on them by Kosovars, including with the use of Molotov cocktails. Towards the end of June, similar incidents took place during the celebration of a historical event of great importance for Serbs, the Battle of Kosovo. Manifestations of aggression are regularly experienced not only by tourists and pilgrims but also by journalists and those refugees and internally displaced persons who dare to return to their homes. All of that is almost completely ignored by the authorities.

There is concern regarding the fate of Serb religious and historico-cultural facilities and heritage sites in Kosovo. The transfer of responsibility for their protection from the relevant international presences to the Kosovo Police has not resolved the issue of their security and safety. More robust guarantees, including legal ones, are needed, and they should be enshrined in Priština's list of obligations.

The situation around the unfinished Christ the Saviour Church in Priština, which could serve as a symbol of religious tolerance, persists. Instead of rapidly resolving that long-lasting problem, the Kosovo authorities have launched excavations within its perimeter to find hidden, buried remains of Albanians repressed by Serbs, which, by the way, as was expected, never turned up. The unfinished structure has been repeatedly desecrated by vandals during that process.

The dialogue between Belgrade and Priština is in a deep freeze. The Kosovo authorities brazenly demonstrate their unwillingness to fulfil key agreements providing for the creation of a community of Serb municipalities in Kosovo. Priština is attempting to justify its unconstructive approach by putting its own, less significant conditions, mostly economic in nature, ones that require considerably more time for comprehensive analysis and assessment. Those who end up falling hostage to such shady and dubious manipulations are the ordinary people, who continue to suffer from all possible types of discrimination on the part of the Priština institutions.

By way of illustration, allow me to recall the campaign launched in Serbian-speaking municipalities aimed at replacing Serbian forms of identification documents with Kosovar ones. Those refusing to do so have experienced difficulties in accessing services that require proof of identity, as well as in crossing administrative borders and lines. Such initiatives are not provided for under resolution 1244 (1999) and represent a dangerous "improptu" on the part of the Kosovo authorities.

Also of concern is the direction of discussions in Kosovo with regard to the so-called agreement on territorial delineation with Montenegro. Increasingly, nationalist calls are heard in favour of unifying all Albanian lands, including those in Serbia, Macedonia, Greece and Montenegro, and the creation of a "greater Albania". The core of such a pseudo-Albanian State, based on the words of high-level politicians in Priština and Tirana, will be formed by a comprehensive integration between Kosovo and Albania. We urge restraint from such rhetoric, fraught as it is with a further exacerbation of ethnic confrontations, not just in Kosovo but in the region as a whole.

We consider unacceptable recent statements in Priština claiming that the United Nations Mission in Kosovo is allegedly an instrument for Russian influence. We view such statements as attacks not only on the Mission, but also on the United Nations as a whole. We have noted the attempts by Kosovars to delay as long as possible the process of extending the mandate of the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX), despite the seemingly good relations between Brussels and Priština. The ratification of the relevant law did not occur until three days after the expiration of the previous mandate. Despite a significant narrowing of EULEX functions in Kosovo, Priština continues relentlessly to try to deprive that entity of its remaining executive authority and transfer it to the Kosovo authority. Such actions can only cause concern, inter alia in the light of the current prosecutions for serious crimes carried out by the Kosovo Liberation Army.

With regard to the special international tribunal created for that purpose, its initial work continues to be unjustifiably delayed, allowing the potential suspects and the accused to gain time so that they can identify and neutralize any witnesses to their actions. We expect that the new structure will learn from the mistakes of the past and operate decisively and effectively, holding to account all those guilty, regardless of their position in the political hierarchy.

We would again like to draw attention to the fact that, as a result of the weakness of the law-enforcement structures and the security system as a whole, the province constitutes to be a grey zone at the very heart of Europe, used as a safe harbour and transit corridor, not only by organized criminals, but also by radical Islamists. It also facilitates the use of the province's territory by extremist groups to recruit and train fighters. Kosovo is among the top three European sources of individuals fighting for Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant (ISIL). If any measures have been undertaken to end that situation, they are clearly insufficient.

We would also like to draw the Council's attention to the following. Within the framework of visits to

Priština by the Russian Ambassador to Belgrade, our colleagues requested, through the United Nations Mission in the province, the organization of contacts with the commanders of the Kosovo Force (KFOR) for an exchange of views regarding a settlement of the Kosovo problem. After stating that such a meeting required authorization from NATO Headquarters in Brussels, the KFOR command structure ended up not being able to find any time to meet with the Russian party. We deeply regret that the KFOR leadership has drifted away from dialogue with Russia regarding Kosovo. We would like to underscore that NATO forces are present in the province in accordance with resolution 1244 (1999) and are operating under a Security Council-approved mandate. Ignoring Russia, which is a permanent member of the Security Council, is simply unacceptable. We also demand that the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Kosovo include that episode in his quarterly report.

In conclusion, we would like to underscore that, given the unstable internal political and security situation and the ongoing inter-ethnic conflicts and given the deadlock in the dialogue between Belgrade and Priština and the problems regarding the implementation of agreements reached between the parties, we are convinced of the need to maintain a strong United Nations presence in the province and to adequately finance the operation. Regular consideration of the situation of Kosovo by the Council also remains very important. Resolution 1244 (1999) remains fully in force and remains the mandatory international legal basis for a settlement of the situation in the province.

Mr. Hickey (United Kingdom): I thank Special Representative Tanin for his briefing. I also welcome Ambassador Çitaku and Deputy Prime Minister Dačić back to the Council again.

I want to begin by congratulating the representatives from Serbia and from Kosovo on their success in the recent Olympic Games in Rio de Janeiro. The athletes did incredibly well, securing gold medals and no doubt making the countries and the region very proud in the process. As the Ambassador has said, Rio was quite special for Kosovo. For the first time, athletes competed under the Kosovo flag at the Olympic Games. Thanks to judoka Majilinda Kelmendi, Kosovo brought home its first-ever medal, and a gold one at that. That shows that Kosovo is not only a real contender on the international sporting stage, but also that it is increasingly and irreversibly integrating into the international community. Kosovo's membership in the Union of European Football Associations and the Fédération Internationale de Football Association only serve to reinforce that point. We should all welcome their progress.

I begin with that point because I want to contrast that positive, hopeful vision of Kosovo with the negative assessments that are so often shared in the Council every three months. We often hear in the Chamber about the numbers of people protesting in the streets of Priština, but we should also hear about the thousands who came out to celebrate Majilinda's return — the thousands who filled the streets in the hope for a better future for their country. Steps have been taken in this reporting cycle to help seize that future.

First, we welcome the progress made on the Specialist Chambers. Coming to terms with the past is a vital part of building a future for all in Kosovo. So we are pleased that a Registrar for the court has been appointed and that a Chief Prosecutor will be appointed soon.

Secondly, we welcome the return of the opposition to the Assembly. That is an important step, one that must be met with a sustained commitment to dialogue rather than a return to tear gas and protests.

Thirdly, we welcome the downsizing of the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) and the increasing transfer of responsibility to Kosovo for its own rule of law. It will be important to get the transition period right and to continue to build the capacity of the Kosovo authorities through focused monitoring, mentoring and advice.

Challenges remain, of course. We are concerned that the dialogue has stalled. It needs new energy so that the benefits of the normalization of the relations between Kosovo and Serbia can be realized for all. I hope both sides can draw some hope from the literal bridge-building that is ongoing in Mitrovica. But for all the challenges, we also need to gain some perspective. This week, the Council has discussed the horrifying situation in Aleppo, the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and yet another missile launch by the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. Yet we find ourselves again in the Chamber debating an issue that has no need to be on the Council's agenda.

Ambassador Çitaku has already given the example of the fight that took place over a car parking space.

That clearly is not a threat to international peace and security. It is not the only odd inclusion. Is a peaceful protest by taxi drivers or stone-throwing really worth reporting to the Council? While the United Kingdom has the utmost respect for UNMIK and the Special Representative, the inclusion of such low-level incidents detracts from the important reporting that UNMIK is carrying out. Therefore the United Kingdom once again calls again for a reduction both in the number of these meetings and of the reports. Not only will that allow UNMIK to provide better substantive reporting from UNMIK, but the Council can focus on other more pressing issues.

As I have said on previous occasions, we have to accept that discussions in this Chamber exist in a bygone era where Kosovo's independence, its sovereignty and its very existence are still questioned. We need only look to the Olympics to see that that era is over. Instead, ordinary Kosovars now look to Majlinda Kelmendi to begin a new golden era. Let us all help Kosovo seize that future rather than drag it back to the past here in New York.

Mr. Wu Haitao (China) (*spoke in Chinese*): I thank Mr. Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), for his briefing. China welcomes the presence and statement of Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia. China listened carefully to the statement of Ms. Vlora Çitaku.

China respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Serbia and understands Serbia's legitimate concerns on the question of Kosovo. Resolution 1244 (1999) constitutes an important legal basis for a solution to the question of Kosovo. A proper solution, acceptable to the parties concerned, must be reached through dialogue and negotiations, pursuant to the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and within the framework of relevant Security Council resolutions.

China appreciates the rigorous efforts undertaken by the Government of Serbia in seeking a political solution to the Kosovo question. We hope that both sides will continue with their high-level political dialogue, seek a lasting solution to the question of Kosovo and strive to maintain peace and security in the Balkans and the entire European region.

The current security situation in Kosovo is generally stable, but it faces a number of complex and uncertain factors. The parties concerned must effectively protect the legitimate rights of all ethnic communities of Kosovo, promote ethnic reconciliation, persevere in efforts to solve differences through dialogue and avoid taking any action that may further complicate the situation.

China appreciates the work undertaken by UNMIK under the leadership of Special Representative Tanin. We support UNMIK's continued implementation of Security Council mandates. We hope that UNMIK, the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo and the Kosovo Force will enhance their coordination and play an active and constructive role for a proper solution to the Kosovo question.

Mr. Okamura (Japan): I thank Ambassador Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, for his comprehensive briefing. I also welcome Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, and Ambassador Vlora Çitaku to the Security Council.

I will also start with the Rio Olympics. The gold medal in the women's 52 kilogramme judo division, won by Kosovar athlete Majlinda Kelmendi, was also one of the most emotional episodes in Japan, not because Ms. Kelmendi defeated the Japanese contestant in the semi-finals and the Japanese contestant won the bronze medal, but because all the Japanese people were moved by her achievement under such adverse conditions. And we all congratulated her for her gold medal wholeheartedly. I believe that gold medal made history at Kosovo's first Olympics, and Ms. Kelmendi's victory has sent a strong message of hope to the people of Kosovo.

The latest report (S/2016/666) of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo gave me the impression that Kosovo has not yet qualified for a medal in its challenge of institution building. There were dozens of security incidents alleged during the reporting period. We do not see as much significant progress as expected in Serbia- Kosovo relations. The report of the Secretary-General, like previous ones, tells us that political tension remains.

We all know well that much more effort is needed to resolve a conflict once it erupts than to prevent a situation from turning into a conflict. Kosovo has performed well in its endeavours following the conflict, and is deemed to be a good example and precedent to follow. I am talking in general terms. In the aftermath of conflict, the society and community are mostly devastated — violence is all around, criminality is high, social justice is not assured, corruption is everywhere, access to public services is problematic and scarce and internally displaced persons are unable to return home. Even though political leaders tell the people that they are doing their utmost to assure democracy, good governance, the rule of law, human rights and safety and security, the people do not trust the Government. What is the remedy?

At the open debate of the Council in July on the issue of peacebuilding in Africa (see S/PV.7750), our Foreign Minister Mr. Fumio Kishida, encouraged us to focus on the significant role played by institution-building. That message can be also applied to Kosovo. For example, in order to eradicate violence and terror, the police forces in communities need to be trained. For enhanced rule of law and human rights, promoting capacity-building for legal institutions, courts and other judicial structures is crucial. As described in the report of the Secretary-General, we see efforts by the Kosovo authorities in the area of counter-terrorism.

Then comes the question of how to finance and sustain the institution-building. We know that Kosovo remains one of the poorest countries in Europe, largely reflecting its legacies of conflict. However, I would like to underline that Kosovo is a country rich in resources. Kosovo has natural resources. There is a coal mine and a zinc mine, and zinc appears to be the most promising sector for export. Agriculture is rich. It not only provides jobs for approximately 40 per cent of the population, but also remains a main creator of wealth through the farming of potatoes. Kosovo potatoes are of a very good quality. And Kosovo has now started exporting fruit, including berries, to Europe. It may not be common knowledge that Kosovo wines are good. The Kosovo wine industry faced a catastrophic decline in the 1990s, of course, but it is recovering now.

Again, institution-building matters. Measures such as taxation, revenue reform and fair welfare distribution are crucial to economic growth in conflict-affected countries like Kosovo. Effective tax collection ensures a sustainable budget and the allocation of national income to deal with the provision of public services. In a nutshell, the key to peace and security in Kosovo is the establishment of robust, functional institutions.

In paragraph 47 of the report of the Secretary-General, UNMIK

> "has provided operational assistance ... to law enforcement and judicial entities in Kosovo."

In my view, that sort of assistance is crucial. I encourage UNMIK to further its efforts in providing assistance to the Kosovo authorities in institution-building. It is my hope that Kosovo will be awarded a gold medal in the area of institution-building and be capable of standing on its own two feet.

In conclusion, I would like to express my strong expectation that the Kosovar people, who are well-qualified and well-equipped, will fulfil that challenge and thereby shape their own future.

Mr. Vitrenko (Ukraine): I thank Mr. Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his briefing and again assure him of our full support. I also thank Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, and Ms. Vlora Çitaku for their statements.

My delegation has taken note of the conclusions and observations of the most recent report (S/2016/666) of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) and today's briefing on developments in the political and security situation in the territory of Kosovo.

Ukraine welcomes the reported improvements in the political conditions in Kosovo,

> "accompanied by a significant decrease in the pattern of protests, aggressive actions and disruptive tactics by various parties" (*S/2016/666, para. 3*).

At the same time, we regret that the practical implementation of agreements reached under the European Union-facilitated dialogue process between Belgrade and Pristina has not moved forward as significantly as we could have expected. Ukraine actively supports the pursuit of political dialogue between the two sides under the auspices of the European Union (EU).

In our view, there is no alternative to cooperation within the Brussels process. We hope that the

implementation of the Stabilization and Association Agreement between Kosovo and the European Union will be a factor in further stabilizing the situation and promoting a better atmosphere in the talks between Belgrade and Pristina. In that regard, we fully support the Secretary-General's call on both sides not only to resume their engagement, but to show renewed creativity and flexibility for compromise in order to decisively anchor Kosovo and the broader region on a path towards stability and development.

We also call on Belgrade and Pristina to put aside existing differences and to concentrate on issues such as the implementation of the agreement on energy and telecommunications, the opening of the Mitrovica bridge and the establishment of the association of Serb majority municipalities, among other things. Those particular issues could serve as an impetus towards further constructive dialogue. Ukraine believes it is now the precise moment to redouble efforts in fulfilling the provisions of the agreements of 19 April 2013 and 25 August 2015.

Ukraine maintains that another issue to which the parties should pay special attention is the safe and sustainable return of refugees and internally displaced persons. As the Council knows, the problem is very much applicable to Ukraine as well. Due to external aggression, we already have over 1.8 million internally displaced persons. My country is making every possible effort to resolve the issue and, in that light, we fully support the overall approach of the Secretary-General, such that the rights of those who wish to return to their places of origin should be met. We believe that is an important precondition for durable reconciliation between Belgrade and Pristina.

Special attention should also be paid to the continuing assaults on the cultural and religious heritage of non-majority communities, which can further complicate tensions. Ukraine is convinced that the resolution of those problems will promote further political stability in Kosovo.

Ukraine strongly supports the important work carried out by UNMIK and the other international missions operating in Kosovo in promoting reconciliation, transitional justice and human rights and in supporting the normalization process between Belgrade and Pristina. In that regard, we welcome the extension of the mandate of the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo for another two years. The decision taken by the EU Council in June is essential in furthering the effective work of the international mechanism for political stabilization and inter-communal reconciliation.

Mr. Lucas (Angola): We join other members of the Security Council in thanking Special Representative Zahir Tanin for presenting the report (S/2016/666) of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). We welcome the participation in today's meeting of Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia. We equally welcome Ambassador Vlora Çitaku.

The report of the Secretary-General highlights positive developments. We remain encouraged that the overall security situation in Kosovo remains stable and that political conditions have improved, with a significant decrease in the pattern of protests, aggressive actions and disruptive tactics by some parties.

We underline the fundamental role played by the United Nations, through UNMIK, in promoting security, stability, respect for human rights and institution-building, as well as its cooperation with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, and its engagement with Pristina and Belgrade.

A number of sensitive issues remain outstanding in the territory, and political tensions between the Government and opposition parties continue to undermine the normal functioning of Kosovo's institutions. The border demarcation agreement with Montenegro is the most contentious issue currently dominating the political debate in Kosovo. Equally, the agreement for the establishment of the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities in northern Kosovo, signed almost one year ago, continues to be challenged by the opposition's rejection, with its implementation stalled.

On a positive note, we acknowledge that efforts to tackle organized crime and corruption in Kosovo have yielded positive results and that, since September 2015, no Kosovo citizen has been reported as having joined the conflicts in the Middle East. We also welcome the agreement reached by the Joint Working Group on Missing Persons with a view to increasing information exchange and organizing more frequent ad hoc informational meetings. We remain confident that the political leaders of Belgrade and Pristina will be able to

fulfil their commitments and implement the agreements reached under the European Union-facilitated dialogue. We hope that dialogue will proceed in good faith, in a results-oriented manner aimed at a better future with economic and social development for all of the people of the Balkans.

Finally, we underscore that resolution 1244 (1999) remains the applicable legal framework in achieving a comprehensive solution for Kosovo through dialogue and negotiation based on the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations and within the framework of the relevant Security Council resolutions.

Ms. Sison (United States of America): We welcome First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, Mr. Dačić and Ambassador Çitaku back to the Security Council for this quarterly briefing.

First of all, I would like to start by taking a moment to congratulate the athletes from both of their countries for the excellent display of sportsmanship in Rio de Janeiro. We would like to welcome Kosovo to the international athletic community, it having participated in the Olympic Games for the first time under its own flag and bringing home, as we have heard, a gold medal in judo. We are sure that years of training and practice went into that winning moment. We also salute Majlinda for making her country proud.

As the Council, we have also put years of effort into examining the situation in Kosovo. Over the years, the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) has assisted Kosovo in the development of multi-ethnic democratic institutions that uphold the rule of law and respect human rights. It is clear that UNMIK has largely fulfilled its mandate and should be further consolidated. We all receive weekly briefing notes from the field, and I draw the Council's attention to UNMIK's submissions as well. There is some excellent political reporting, it is true, but what does the Mission do? What are its remaining tasks? Do those tasks require 125 United Nations staff and other resources to fulfil them? As for the quarterly briefings, the Secretariat and the Security Council both have far more pressing business at hand. We urge fellow Council members to prudently adjust the reporting briefing period for UNMIK from three to six months.

None of that should be construed as a lack of support for Kosovo, however. Indeed, the opposite is true. The United States affirms its support for Kosovo on its journey to becoming a prosperous and peaceful multi-ethnic democracy, fully integrated into the international community. We believe that, when Kosovo succeeds, the entire region succeeds. A democratic, stable and independent Kosovo is a force for regional stability.

In that vein, we welcome Kosovo's and Serbia's efforts to pursue the normalization of relations through the European Union-facilitated dialogue talks. We continue to welcome European Union (EU) High Representative Mogherini's facilitation of the dialogue and commend leaders in both Belgrade and Pristina for taking the difficult decisions necessary to make progress in the talks.

Thankfully, work has finally started to revitalize the Austerlitz Bridge in Mitrovica, which will remove barriers that, for too long, have perpetuated and reinforced divisions rather than bringing people together. We would like to thank NATO and the NATO mission in Kosovo for their support for security during the revitalization of the bridge and for continued essential work to ensure a secure and safe environment in Kosovo.

We note with some disappointment that the pace of progress on normalization slowed over the past year. We call on the leaderships in Belgrade and Pristina to reinvigorate the dialogue process, including by rapidly reaching compromises and fully implementing the agreements Prime Minister Vučic and Prime Minister Mustafa reached in August 2015. The implementation of those agreements has lagged for too long. We call on leadership of both sides to uphold their political commitments and advance the dialogue without delay. Vice-President Biden recently visited Serbia and Kosovo, where he noted the important progress that both countries had made on the road to comprehensive normalization. In Belgrade, Vice-President Biden welcomed the progress Serbia had made towards its goal of EU accession and the difficult reforms it is making to get there. We encourage Prime Minister Vučić and President Nikolić to stay the course and carry on with the significant work that remains. Serbia's future prosperity lies with Europe and is dependent on a transparent and just society.

In Pristina, the Biden family was honoured by the Government of Kosovo, which named a road after the late Beau Biden, who served in Kosovo with the Department of Justice in 2001, helping to establish

judicial solutions and the rule of law. As Vice-President Biden noted, Kosovo has made tremendous progress since his previous visit in 2009. But as the Vice-President said, there is more work to be done. Kosovo's leaders have had to make very tough decisions for the future of their country. Kosovo's leaders need to continue to work with their neighbours. With regard to Serbia, I have already spoken about the need to fully implement dialogue agreements, and, with regard to Montenegro, Kosovo needs to ratify its agreement to demarcate their shared border so that Kosovo can continue advancing along its European path.

At the same time, Kosovo continues to face serious economic challenges that demand greater action by its Government. While the Government has taken some steps to introduce policies to foster economic growth, we encourage more progress to improve governance, combat corruption, increase transparency and bolster the rule of law. We welcome the extension of the mandate of the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, which will help strengthen justice and fight corruption there. Progress in those areas will help attract foreign investment, thereby contributing to Kosovo's development.

As the United States and Kosovo's international partners work with the Government to advance democratic and economic development, it is of serious concern that there are those in Kosovo who would seek to use violence and misinformation to derail the country's progress. The recent resumption, by some political parties, of the use of tear gas in the Assembly and the heinous attack against the public broadcaster have no place in a democracy. Such actions are counter to democratic values and threaten the welfare of the country and all of its people. We commend Kosovo President Thaçi for his personal efforts to advance reconciliation. Laying a wreath in Staro Gracko to commemorate the children killed by ethnically motivated criminals in 2003 was a courageous step to benefit the country.

We also welcome and encourage the important work that Kosovo is undertaking to address the serious problem of foreign fighters, which is a threat to us all and must be addressed collectively. That underscores the need for a responsible, inclusive approach to security challenges that fully integrates the entire region, including Kosovo, into the vital international institutions that are working to increase the security of our peoples. That must include INTERPOL, where we can cooperate and coordinate on issues vital to the national security of all United Nations States Members and where shared values bring us together. It serves no one's interests, except those of criminals and extremists, to prevent Kosovo from making the fullest possible contribution to ensuring its security and that of its neighbours.

In conclusion, as we gear up for the annual high-level meeting of the General Assembly, we note the progress that Kosovo is making in its bid for recognition and, one day, membership in the United Nations. We applaud Suriname's recent recognition of Kosovo. We call on all Member States to recognize Kosovo and welcome the country's people into the international community as they strive to take their rightful place as a full-fledged Member of the United Nations. It is good for Kosovo, good for the international Organization and good for the international community. And it is inevitable.

Mrs. Nuñez (Uruguay) (*spoke in Spanish*): At the outset, I would like to thank Mr. Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) for his briefing. I would also like to welcome and express my gratitude for the statement by Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia. We have also paied close attention to the statement by Ms. Vlora Çitaku.

First, as we have said in previous statements, Uruguay believes that resolution 1244 (1999) is the internationally accepted legal basis for resolving the situation in Kosovo, which includes full respect for the principles of the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Serbia.

We are encouraged to hear that the political conditions in Kosovo are improving to some extent, as indicated in the most recent report (S/2016/666) of the Secretary-General and as just mentioned by Special Representative Tanin. Nevertheless, the challenges on the security front continue to be significant. There has been tension, attacks and other alarming incidents, including — and I would like to highlight this point — on members of the minority communities, many of them Kosovar Serbs. Uruguay regrets the occurrence of those incidents, expresses its firm rejection of the use of violence and encourages all efforts to find a way to promote peaceful and inclusive

dialogue in order to make progress towards resolving the problems of Kosovo.

We are discouraged by the lack of significant progress with regard to the practical implementation of the agreements reached within the context of the dialogue process undertaken between Belgrade and Pristina facilitated by the European Union. We urge all parties to step up the dialogue so as to reach compromise and make progress along the path towards stability and development.

Uruguay attaches the greatest importance to full respect for human rights. We understand that in the case of Kosovo what is of particular importance are the efforts undertaken on the issue of persons who disappeared in the recent conflict. We are particularly pleased to note the holding of a working session of the Joint Working Group on Missing Persons, in which the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK) participated and at which Belgrade and Pristina agreed to increase their exchanges of information on specific cases. We believe that those steps, in addition to providing consolation to the families of the disappeared and healing the wounds of the past, are acts of justice that are important strides towards reconciliation.

My country is also concerned about the situation of the internally displaced. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees estimates that the total number of internally displaced persons in Kosovo at the end of June 2016 stood at 16,714. In that regard, we note with satisfaction the fact that the Kosovo authorities endorsed a concept document on the regulation of displaced persons and durable solutions. The document points to the need to establish a legal foundation to ensure accountability of the authorities and to define institutional mechanisms that would then facilitate the return of families and internally displaced persons in safe and sustainable conditions.

Another important aspect highlighted in the report of the Secretary-General is the phenomenon of migration through the region towards Europe. In that connection, we believe that regional cooperation focused on a human rights approach is fundamental.

I wish to conclude by reiterating the fact that Uruguay very much values the role played by UNMIK in promoting security, stability and respect for human rights. We also recognize the important role played by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Kosovo Force and the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo. Moreover, we would like to highlight the substantial contribution of the United Nations agencies present on the ground.

Mr. Seck (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): I would like to start by congratulating Ambassador Zahir Tanin, Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), for his briefing. I would also like to thank His Excellency Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of Serbia, and Ambassador Vlora Çitaku of the Republic of Kosovo for their statements.

My delegation welcomes the fact that, despite some residual tension, there has been an improvement in the political situation in Kosovo, marked by a palpable decrease in demonstrations and violent acts, as well as the holding of legislative elections that unfolded without any major incident. Furthermore, we welcome the fact that the new President and the new Prime Minister have reaffirmed their commitment to the process of normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina as launched under the auspices of European Union, as well as the fact that they are committed to the full implementation of all agreements already reached, including the agreement on the establishment of the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities in Kosovo.

While we regret the lack of progress since the latest meeting held in Brussels, Senegal would like to encourage both parties to keep up the momentum towards improving the political situation. I encourage political actors in Kosovo to work to maintain a peaceful climate, which depends largely on the quality of the dialogue between Pristina and Belgrade. My delegation also encourages both parties to continue and intensify that dialogue to the highest possible level under the auspices of the European Union and urges partner countries with influence to exert that influence to promote the talks. Furthermore, my delegation welcomes the progress made with respect to integrating the judges, prosecutors and support staff of the Serbian judicial system into that of Kosovo pursuant to the relevant agreement between Belgrade and Pristina.

Further grounds for satisfaction for my country are the European Commission's positive assessment of Kosovo's fulfilment of requirements to advance its visa liberalization application, giving rise to the Commission's proposal to lift the European visa requirements for the

people of Kosovo, on the understanding that, by the day of adoption of the proposal, Kosovo would have ratified the agreement on territorial demarcation with Montenegro and strengthened its track record in the fight against organized crime and corruption. Finally, my delegation welcomes the efforts undertaken by the Government of Kosovo in terms of promoting the rule of law, as well as its intention to establish an inter-ministerial coordination group between ministries and relevant institutions.

It is for those reasons that the extension of the mandate of European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX) through 14 June 2018 seems appropriate to us, as it will no doubt contribute to the consolidation of the achievements in the areas of the rule of law and human rights. Furthermore, we welcome the activities undertaken by UNMIK in terms of promoting reconciliation, transitional justice, human rights and support for the process of normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina.

In addition to encouraging continued dialogue, Senegal would like to urge all stakeholders to work to calm the situation and make strides towards development by promoting the implementation of the agreements of 25 August 2015 in Northern Kosovo. We therefore reiterate our support for the joint European Union-United Nations programme aimed at building trust among communities by protecting their cultural heritage. Accordingly, we advocate strengthening cooperation on the exchange of information to resolve the issue of disappeared persons.

In conclusion, my delegation wishes to again pay tribute to Special Representative Tanin for his enlightened leadership of UNMIK. We also welcome the positive contributions of the Kosovo Force, EULEX, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and, of course, the European Union, all involved players clearly committed to peace and progress in Kosovo.

Mr. Aboulwafa (Egypt) (*spoke in Arabic*): I would like to thank Mr. Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his comprehensive briefing. We would like to reiterate Egypt's complete support for his efforts. I would also like to welcome Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister of Serbia, and Ms. Vlora Çitaku and to thank them for their statements.

Egypt wishes to reaffirm the importance of building on the absolute commitment voiced by the leaders of both communities to implement the agreements reached between them. There is also a need to spare no effort to achieve a peaceful, complete settlement of all pending issues between Belgrade and Pristina through dialogue and serious negotiations, based on the principle of goodwill and mutual respect shown by both sides within the framework of the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, as well as all the relevant Council resolutions, especially resolution 1244 (1999). That outcome can be achieved only by establishing a conducive environment in the region and the resumption of the political dialogue under the auspices of the European Union.

We also underscore the importance of making progress in the implementation of the August 2015 Agreement, including all its provisions, and of seizing the opportunity to achieve a lasting settlement, which would open the door to future economic and political development and prosperity for all peoples in the region. We also welcome the ratification a few months ago of the headquarters agreement with the Netherlands to host the Specialist Chambers to investigate war crimes. We hope that this will lay the foundations for the rule of law, justice and full reconciliation in Kosovo. We should provide all the necessary support to ensure that the Chambers are successful in its work, and we hope to see it establish its premises and begin to function as soon as possible.

We would also like to highlight the following efforts undertaken by the authorities of Kosovo: the voluntary repatriation of displaced persons, the protection of the religious and cultural heritage, efforts towards reconciliation and non-discrimination at all levels of society, the protection of minority rights and, of course, the strengthening of the rule of law. We must also provide support to the authorities to address the challenges posed by immigration and the spread of extremism and violence. We support the five-year strategy announced by the authorities to combat extremism. We hold out the hope that the most recent presidential elections will serve as a starting point for a successful internal political process.

We support the efforts by the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo and the Special Representative. We would also like to underscore the importance of strengthening coordination between the Mission and the European Union and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe in order to fully implement the provisions of resolution 1244 (1999).

Mr. Méndez Graterol (Venezuela) (*spoke in Spanish*): I would like to thank Mr. Zahir Tanin, Special Representative of the Secretary-General, for his briefing. I also welcome the statement by Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign of Serbia. And I welcome the presence of Ms. Vlora Çitaku.

The Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela reiterates that strict adherence to international law — non-intervention and respect for the sovereignty, territorial integrity, unity and political independence of States and the peaceful settlement of disputes — is an essential element for the maintenance of international peace and security. In advocating for a peaceful settlement of the Kosovo issue, my country believes that resolution 1244 (1999) continues to be the applicable international legal basis for the achievement of a successful political solution in the interest of peace. In that regard, we call for ensuring the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Serbia.

We also reiterate our support for the implementation of the First Agreement on Principles Governing the Normalization of Relations, signed of 19 April 2013. In that context, the support of the United Nations remains crucial in Kosovo, particularly through the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK), so as to promote security, stability and respect for human rights. That work has been complemented by the Kosovo Force (KFOR) and the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo (EULEX). We express once again that UNMIK, KFOR and EULEX, based on their respective mandates, should continue to play a proactive, balanced, neutral and complementary role to direct dialogue, with a view to promoting a lasting and mutually acceptable solution on the Kosovo issue.

Our country believes that dialogue and negotiations between Serbia and the local authorities in the province of Kosovo must be maintained so that the parties can reach a mutually acceptable solution on the issue. We regret that to date there has not been significant progress in that process, and we therefore encourage all the parties to intensify their efforts to reverse the situation. Of particular importance is the establishment of the association/community of Serb-majority municipalities in northern Kosovo, among other aspects. We therefore urge the authorities of the province to work decisively to achieve that goal, as was agreed at the highest level in Brussels. Similarly, we consider it important to support the process of the voluntary return of Serbs displaced from their homes in Kosovo, in strict compliance with the 2013 Brussels agreements.

We consider it necessary to foster full respect for the human rights of minorities persons displaced from their places of origin, so that they can fully enjoy those rights free of discrimination. However, we are concerned by the ongoing incidents against Serbian Kosovar citizens in certain areas. In that regard, we once again urge that the appropriate measures be taken to rectify that situation and to prevent persecution and harassment based on ethnic or religious grounds. Furthermore, the reconciliation process requires ongoing efforts by the Joint Working Group on Missing Persons with a view to clarifying the fates of those who disappeared during the conflict. We welcome the results of the Working Group's meeting in June, whereby the parties committed to stepping up exchanges of information on specific cases and to organizing ad hoc operational meetings more frequently. In terms of cultural and religious heritage, we reiterate the need for the parties to work together in order to ensure their effective protection.

In the context of the fight against impunity, we encourage all parties to make efforts and take concrete steps that can lead to increased trust in the judiciary and the courts. We therefore urge them to intensify their efforts so that the Specialist Chambers can come into effect, which would be responsible for investigating the allegations of war crimes and crimes against humanity committed in the armed conflict in Kosovo, as one more step towards the reconciliation process between the parties.

In conclusion, we once again encourage the parties to redouble their efforts to find a political solution that is peaceful, just and lasting within the framework of international law, and in full compliance with resolution 1244 (1999) and the Brussels agreements of 2013.

Ms. Schwalger (New Zealand): I welcome First Deputy Prime Minister Dačić and Ambassador Çitaku to the Security Council today, and I thank Special Representative Tanin for his briefing.

New Zealand welcomes progress in the political situation in Kosovo, as outlined in the Secretary-General's report (S/2016/666) and in Special Representative Tanin's briefing. In particular, we are pleased to see some improvement in the standards of political engagement, following the disruptive incidents in the Kosovo Assembly earlier this year. We

look forward to an even more settled political future for Kosovo, free from political violence and with due respect for its democratic institutions of Government and for its courts and judges.

In a climate where political disillusionment is apparently increasing, it is particularly important to ensure all people, in particular youth, feel they have a stake in Kosovo's future. We continue to call for renewed efforts to normalize relations between Kosovo and Serbia. In that regard, we hope that more progress can be made in implementing agreements reached between the two sides, including in relation to energy, telecommunications and Serb-majority municipalities in Kosovo.Kosovars and Serbians will always be neighbours, and all will benefit from pursuing reconciliation and developing habits of peaceful coexistence.

We welcome efforts by the European Union (EU), including by EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy Federica Mogherini, to facilitate dialogue between Belgrade and Pristina. It is encouraging that European leaders remain focused on supporting reconciliation in Kosovo and the normalization of relations in the region. Reconciliation efforts will be strengthened by confronting the past in order that people can move forward together. We therefore welcome the progress made towards establishing the Specialist Chambers to try cases brought forward by the EU Special Investigative Task Force. We hope that the court will be operational this year, with support from the EU and, in particular, of the Netherlands.

Finally, we continue to support the Security Council considering the adoption of a more flexible approach to how it considers this agenda item, mindful of the many other issues of more immediate gravity that the Council has to deal with.

Mr. Lamek (France) (*spoke in French*): I, too, thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo, Mr. Zahir Tanin, for his briefing. I assure him once again of our support in the exercise of his functions. I also thank the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic Serbia, Mr. Ivica Dačić, and Kosovo's Ambassador, Ms. Vlora Çitaku, for their statements.

The future of Kosovo and its regional integration no longer primarily plays out in the Security Council, but in the framework of the political dialogue held under the auspices of the European Union. New progress has been made on that front in recent months, in particular with the start of work on the bridge in Mitrovica, which we welcome.

Nevertheless, those advances are not enough. We expect that all the commitments made in the context of the agreements concluded under the auspices of the European Union will be implemented as soon as possible, including with regard to the setting up of an association/community of Serb-majority municipalities, which is a key element of the dialogue. We therefore urgently call upon the Kosovar and Serbian authorities to intensify their efforts to produce further concrete results in the coming months. It is particularly important that the dialogue at the political level can resume as soon as possible.

The normalization of relations between Belgrade and Pristina remains generally a vital prerequisite for their respective progress on the path towards European integration, which was once again encouraged at the Paris-Balkans 2016 Summit, held on 4 July.

The continuation of efforts to consolidate the rule of law in Kosovo must also remain a priority. That first concerns the fight against impunity. We had already had an opportunity to welcome the swift ratification by the President of Kosovo of the headquarters agreement signed with the Dutch Government for the installation of Specialist Chambers in The Hague. That is a crucial step. We know that the Kosovo authorities work to enable all components of the Specialist Chambers to start functioning as soon as possible and to take action against those responsible for the crimes set out in the Marty report. We encourage them to continue along that path.

The consolidation of the rule of law also involves the fight against radicalization in all its forms. France welcomes the unconditional commitment of Kosovo in that area, both locally and in the international coalition against Da'esh. I also take this opportunity to reiterate our support for the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, which contributes every day to the rule of law and security in Kosovo and whose mandate was just renewed by the Council of the European Union.

France also welcomes the relative decline in tension registered in Kosovo's internal political scene since the presidential election in February. The building of an independent, modern, democratic State also entails the

establishment of a peaceful and responsible dialogue among the various stakeholders of the political scene, in compliance with the provisions of the Constitution and in the framework of existing institutions. Violence, hateful rhetoric and disruptions in the proceeedings of the legitimately elected Assembly have no place in the type of society that the overwhelming majority of Kosovar citizens aspire to. We will therefore continue to condemn them with the same firmness, whatever the reasons. We also remain concerned about the persistence of incidents against members of minority communities and against religious and cultural heritage sites.

It is important that the Kosovo authorities continue to make efforts in favour of dialogue among the different political forces and for the establishment of a peaceful and inclusive society. The reforms implemented in the framework of the Stabilization and Association Agreement with the European Union are already leading in that direction. Kosovo can count on our full support in that regard.

Finally, France continues to support the efforts of the Kosovar authorities to achieve international recognition of their State. Kosovo's participation in the Olympic Games in Rio de Janeior, crowned by the country's first Olympic gold medal, in judo, is an important symbolic step in that regard.

I conclude by recalling once again our hope for a continued gradual transfer of competencies from the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo to the State's authorities, as well as for a review of the cycle of the Council's review of the situation in Kosovo, in view of the continuous progress with regard to the consolidation of Kosovo's institutions and the bilateral dialogue between Kosovo and Serbia. Our debates seem to be out of sync with those enouraging developments.

Mr. González de Linares Palou (Spain) (*spoke in Spanish*): Like the speakers who took the floor before me, I would like to thank the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and Head of the United Nations Mission in Kosovo, Mr. Zahir Tanin, and to welcome the presence of the First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, Mr. Ivica Dačić, as well as Ms. Vlora Çitaku.

As the Security Council is well aware, without prejudice to its position of principle, Spain has always been prepared to constructively support measures and processes that are compatible with our position and that can as a benefit the people of the territory of Kosovo as a whole. In that context, Spain has from the outset supported the high-level talks between Pristina and Belgrade facilitated by the European Union. We believe that the dialogue should continue to play a key role and remain a priority. It is very important for the dialogue to continue not only at a technical level, but above all at the political level. It is crucial that the agreements achieved thus far be implemented and that work continues in the joint quest to find solutions to specific problems encountered by the citizens of Kosovo.

We are aware of the fact that circumstances such as respective cycles of elections explain the absence in recent months of high-level meetings in the framework of that dialogue. However, now that those events are behind us, it is time for the parties to decisively return to the dialogue with renewed political courage. We are also aware that none of the parties is 100 per cent satisfied by the dialogue. That is logical, for the process is still a work in progress. But the progress made since the process began, in April 2013, is undeniable. There has been progress at the political level and citizens have enjoyed specific benefits. That should be enough to justify the renewal of the parties' decisive and genuine commitment to the process.

In the same manner and for the same reason, there must also be courage and political will to implement the commitments undertaken to date. In that respect, Spain remains convinced that the establishment of Serb-majority communities and municipalities is essential and must be prioritized. That is both important for both parties and an unavoidable step in achieving genuine reconciliation among the various communities in Kosovo. While it is a key issue, unfortunately it remains unresolved.

I would like to again express Spain's full support for the United Nations Interim Administration Mission and Kosovo and for the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. My country is fully aware of the important continuing role that the Mission is called upon to play in Kosovo today. We highly commend Special Representative Tanin's prioritized attention to reconciliation, among other issues, and to communities living peacefully among one another, with full respect for human rights. All of those issues are essential if we truly wish to definitively overcome the situation that gave rise to the conflict in Kosovo in the first place.

The role of political leaders and representatives is in all self-defined democratic societies. Their responsibilities lie beyond mere management of public affairs. They must serve as an example of living together in peace. In that respect we must take note of the positive elements indicated by the Special Representative and highlighted in the report (S/2016/666) of the Secretary-General that relate to certain improvements in the political environment in Priština. However, that path still lies far ahead. We urge all political actors to definitively reject all incendiary rhetoric and support for violent or illegal actions and to fight such actions with the weapon of the law, thereby setting a responsible example in the exercise of public functions.

It is also our responsibility to do what is right here at the Security Council. Presentations in our regularly scheduled debates should always take place in a constructive spirit, with a view to achieving definitive reconciliation, as we all desire, and not just the implementation of resolution 1244 (1999). Hence the importance of those discussions and of organizing them on a regular basis.

The President: I shall now make a statement in my capacity as the representative of Malaysia.

My delegation welcomes His Excellency Mr. Ivica Dačić, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Serbia, and Ambassador Vlora Çitaku back to New York and thanks them for their statements. We also thank Special Representative of the Secretary-General Zahir Tanin for his briefing.

Malaysia congratulates Serbia on its formation of a new Government following the recent general elections, and His Excellency Mr. Dačić in particular on his reappointment. We also congratulate Kosovo for its participation in the Olympic games in Rio de Janeiro and for winning a gold medal in its first-ever, and memorable, participation in the Olympics.

Malaysia is encouraged by the improvements in the political and economic situation in Kosovo. The economy seems to be steadily recovering, following the implementation of reform measures on the part of the Kosovo Government. We call on the leaders of Kosovo to remain steadfast in implementing the socioeconomic reforms, particularly in tackling the problem of unemployment. Those reforms are especially important in view of Kosovo's aspiration to achieve European integration, with a view to promoting peace, stability and prosperity for Kosovo and the region.

On the political front, Malaysia has noted in the report (S/2016/666) of the Secretary-General a significant reduction in the number of violent protests by various parties in Kosovo. Such protests had featured prominently in prior reports of the Secretary-General. We also welcome the progress made in the integration of judges, prosecutors and support staff from the Serbian judicial system into the Kosovo system, as part of the 15-point Brussels Agreement in 2013.

We urge both sides to further intensify efforts to implement the outstanding commitments set out in the Brussels Agreement by engaging constructively with each other in a spirit of dialogue and cooperation. In particular, we wish to see further progress on establishing the association of Serb-majority municipalities, on the energy and telecommunications sector and on the opening of the Mitrovica bridge.

Malaysia commends the ongoing efforts by the Kosovo Government to counter terrorism, violent extremism and radicalization. With regard to the latest developments during the reporting period, we welcome the Assembly of Kosovo's adoption of the law on preventing money-laundering and terrorist financing. With regard to the Kosovo Specialist Chambers, based in the Netherlands, we note that the court has not yet started functioning, as it is currently awaiting approval from the Netherlands Parliament.

Malaysia sees value in the call for a reduction in the frequency of the Council's meetings on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK). We concur with the view that the situation in Kosovo does not merit the current level of attention on the part of the Council. We are also concerned at the unproductive exchanges we often witness in the Council Chamber regarding the issue of Kosovo, which runs contrary to the necessary spirit of reconciliation, constructive engagement and normalization of relations.

Lastly, I join my other colleagues in reaffirming support for UNMIK, which continues to play a key role in promoting security, stability and respect for human rights in Kosovo. We also commend the leadership of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General and the important role of the European Union Rule of Law Mission in Kosovo, the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and the Kosovo Force in ensuring peace, security and the rule of law in Kosovo.

I now resume my functions as President of the Security Council.

The meeting rose at 12.25 p.m.